

Day & Night - Click It or Ticket

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Did you know there's a difference in the number of people who wear their seat belts at night versus during the daytime? Nationally, seat belt use is often 10% lower at night than in the day even though a person's chances of being killed in a crash at night triples! In Kent County, observational seat belt surveys show that there is a nearly 15% difference between daytime and night time belt use, and an 8% difference in Sussex County.

Why does this happen? Often, the riskiest drivers are out on the roadways at night, and are less likely to wear seat belts overall. Some people may also think that it's harder for police to see that they aren't wearing a seat belt when they're on the roads at night, as opposed to when they're traveling during the day.

No matter what the reason, in an effort to increase the number of people who buckle up both day and night, the Delaware Office of Highway Safety will be coordinating the first *Click It or Ticket* campaign for 2009 during the last week of February (22-28). *Click It or Ticket* is a high visibility enforcement and public awareness campaign aimed at saving lives by increasing the number of Delawareans who regularly buckle up.

Awareness efforts will begin the week of February 15th and will focus on information related to night time seat belt use. For example: more than half of the people killed in night time crashes from 2003 – 2007 in the First State were not wearing seat belts. The public awareness component of the campaign will include statewide placement of billboards, radio, and television ads, and the distribution of informational posters, fliers and table tents through schools, corporations, businesses, hospitals and police agencies. These materials can be obtained by contacting OHS at 302-672-7635 or Merritt Burke at the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension at 302-856-7303.

Stepped up enforcement of Delaware's seat belt and child restraint laws will start on the 22nd of February and continue through the 28th. State, county, and municipal police agencies throughout Delaware will conduct both roving, and stationary traffic

safety patrols in well lit areas during this time, and will be on the lookout for those who violate Delaware's occupant protection laws. Officers will also be on the lookout for impaired and aggressive drivers, who also are less likely to wear seat belts.

Delaware's seat belt law requires all vehicle occupants, even back seat passengers, to be "properly" buckled up. "Properly" means that both lap and shoulder belts must be worn. In particular, the shoulder belt must be worn across the chest. Anyone who puts the shoulder belt under their arm, or behind their back is in violation of state law and is putting themselves at great risk for being seriously injured in a crash.

The law allows officers to pull over a driver if he sees any person in the vehicle not wearing a safety belt. Officers will issue citations for seat belt violations as part of a zero tolerance policy. The ticket, which goes to the driver no matter who is unbuckled in the vehicle, is a \$25.00 fine plus court administrative fees.

Delaware's child restraint law says that the driver is responsible for making sure all children in the vehicle are properly buckled up. All children under the age of 8 years or 65lbs must be in the appropriate child restraint seat (an infant, toddler or booster seat). Children who are 8 or at least 65lbs in weight, whichever comes first must be restrained in a seat belt. Children under the age of 12 years old must ride in the back seat when passenger air bags are present up front. Child restraint violations are also \$25.00 plus court administrative fees.

Last February during the night time *Click It or Ticket* initiative, police officers statewide issued 372 citations for violations of Delaware's seat belt law. Additionally, 30 arrests were made for criminal violations such as impaired driving, drug offenses, and the existence of outstanding warrants on a person.

Click It or Ticket has been successful in raising seat belt use in Delaware from 67% in 2001 to an all time high of 91% in 2008. The national seat belt use rate is 82%.

For more information on Delaware's seat belt law or the *Click It or Ticket* campaign, please visit the Office of Highway Safety's website at www.ohs.delaware.gov and click on the *Click It or Ticket* icon.